

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEPAL

From Tradition to Modernity

Edited
by

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RELIGION AND SOCIETY

THE 32 MAHARJAN TOLS OF KATHMANDU CITY

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The Farmers (Maharjan or Jyapu) of Kathmandu today constitute a group of about 2900 households (personal survey, 1991) that marry almost exclusively among themselves. They still rely heavily on agriculture work, though some of them have recently taken up other trades and a few jobs in the bureaucracy. In 1972, the Maharjan made up 24 % of the total Newar population of the city (1). Such a proportion is less than in Bhaktapur (over 50 %) and Patan (38-40 %). However this group forms the backbone of old Kathmandu city and has played down to the present a prominent role in the religious urban life. They also contribute greatly to the overall social order. Traditionally, the Farmers of Kathmandu are always said to be divided among 32 named quarters, *tvah* in Newari, *tol* in Nepali. These *tvah* cover most of the historic core of the city and seem to be connected with an old ideal division of the town. They have in any case to be distinguished from the present division into 35 wards used for administrative purposes by the central government. These modern wards, which spread over a much greater area than the old Malla city, do not correspond at all to the 32 traditional *tvah*.

A standard list of the "32 *tvah*" has been printed by some Nepali scholars, distributing them among the three parts (upper, middle, lower) of the city (2). It is more or less relevant insofar as the names are concerned, but it wrongly mixes Maharjan and Prajapati (Potters) quarters. Now, the Potters form (at least at present) a group totally distinct from

the farmers. In our survey, we have been able to identify 28 Maharjan *tvah* - some of them having split recently - and five separate Prajapati *tvah*. In spite of this discrepancy, the old concept of "32 *tol*" is nonetheless very much alive among the Maharjan and is still used to designate the whole Farmer community of Kathmandu.

The idea of 32 *tvah* has a rich symbolic signification. In the Indian world, the number "32" summons up a wide spectrum of religious references. The outermost border of the *Vastupurusamandala*, the square on which rests the Hindu temple and the plan of all architectural forms of the Hindus, for instance is sub-divided into 32 units, each linked with a divinity. Even now, the altar built for the Fire-sacrifice by Newar Hindu and Buddhist priests is made up of 32 bricks and 32 kinds of grains are to be offered on it during ceremonies. This auspicious number is also to be founded in the thirty-two petals of the lotus of Akasa, which in architecture is the typical basis or support of a building. Similarly, the king is supposed to have 32 auspicious marks (*battislaksana*) on his body, as is the Kumari living goddess. Undoubtedly, "32" is derived from the original "4", corresponding to the four cardinal directions. It is a multiple of 4, 8, 16, all these numbers being used both by Hindus and Buddhists to represent the universe on a reduced scale.

When does this division originate in Kathmandu city ? Unfortunately, historical data are totally wanting to answer this question of basic importance. Some of the names of the quarters are mentioned in medieval inscriptions, but we do not actually know when the notion of "32 *tol*" was introduced in the urban settlement. The first trace of it dates only from the second half of the 19th century. It is found in Oldfield's book *Sketches from Nepal* (1880). The author, a surgeon attached to the British Residency in Kathmandu, reports that the city is said to be divided into thirty-two small squares or *tol*

(p.103). What is more, he writes, "The number of gateways corresponds exactly with the number of squares (tols) within the city, each gateway being associated with a particular square, and placed under the municipal control of the same local authorities, who were as much responsible for the repair and defence of the gateway as they were for the general management of the square" (pp. 95-96). It is true that Bhaktapur's National Art Gallery contains a map of Kathmandu from the turn of the 20th century showing 33 gates instead of 32, all around the city (3). But "33" can be read as 32 (Vedic gods) + 1 (Indra, at their head). Yet, the names of the gates appearing on this map, each referring to one quarter in the city, do not correspond, or very imperfectly, to the present list of the Maharjan quarters.

Presumably, the existence of the "32 *tol*" predates the 19th century. But this is a matter of conjecture. At present, it is enough to state that this division must be posterior to the unification of the city by Ratna Malla in the 15th century. Even if it is not so old, we will see that this Indian notion is made up from archaic elements which point back to the very origin of the city.

Let us turn to the present ethnographic facts. The Farmers today use the word *tvah* in two interrelated meanings : a) a Maharjan social grouping, characterized both by a compulsory musical association called *dhimay Guthi*, and by exogamy ; b) an old territorial unit, the residential quarter, which is defined by a number of sacred places and by ritual practices ; within this quarter, the Maharjan form only a part of the population and are mixed with other Newar and Parbatiya castes. The Farmers mingle the two meanings ambiguously. There is indeed some ground for confusion, since the first one also denotes a spatial unit. But, as will be shown, the social grouping *tvah* remains active even when the corresponding territory has vanished. It must be noted that non-Maharjan

castes always use the word *tvah* in the second sense. That is why a Maharjan informant could report to us straightforwardly that Sresthas (the Hindu Newars traders caste) have no *tvah*.

The *tvah* as social unit

The musical association *dhimay guthi* and Nasah dyah, the god of music

In their first meaning, the 28 quarters referred to above are the major segments of the Maharjan community of Kathmandu. They constitute corporate exogamous groups, having their own identity, owning a common territory and uniting in several ritual activities. The solidarity within the group is expressed by a common name built up from the name of its corresponding quarter and the suffix *mi*, litt. "men" : e.g., Wotumi, Wanghami, etc. Most of the relationship within the Farmers of the capital rest on these quarters. Their size varies considerably : the largest (Musum Baha) is made up of 300 households, the smallest (Kusu Biyalachi) of only 25 households. The members are exclusively Maharjan.

Each of these segments forms a social unit of the *guthi* type. As it is well known, this term designates in Newari a whole variety of voluntary or compulsory associations connected with the performance of certain tasks or services which often have a religious goal or motive as their basis (4). In the present case, all the male members of the quarter, *tvahpi*, adults or considered as such, must belong to this association. The membership is hereditary and follows the agnatic line. A person will never have the opportunity to change *tvah* during his life time, and he cannot be a member of two quarters simultaneously. Within the group, the ultimate authority rests on the five seniormost men. These five eldest, *thakali*,

are the key figures of the quarter and the conservators of traditional usage. They decide "what is good and what is bad".

The interesting point is that this closed association, called *tvah guthi*, *dhimay guthi*, or *nasah puja guthi*, is based on a cylindrical drum known in Newari by the name of *dhimay*. In Kathmandu, such drums are peculiar to the Maharjan and maintain the identity of the local segments of the Farmers caste. The *dhimay* is shaped from a section of a thick, hollowed-out tree trunk. It has two smooth heads to which no tuning paste is applied. The right head is struck with a cane stick which is rolled into a spiral at one end ; the left head is struck with the bare hand. The diameter of the heads of this instrument varies in size from 27 to 42 cm for a body length of 50 cm (5). The heads are fastened to the body with leather thongs which are laced diagonally across one another in an X-pattern. This instrument is played in pairs, almost exclusively while walking. It is always combined with the small cymbals *bhusya*. In the upper and central part of the city, it is also accompanied by a metal disc, *kepui*, struck with a wooden hammer, and in the lower part by a long (80 to 100 cm) slender trumpet called *pomgah* which needs an additional support of bamboo when played.

In the upper and central part of Kathmandu, one or several men precede the *dhimay* players carrying long bamboo poles which are decorated with colourful flags and two yak tails. These poles, called *dhunya* or *dhunya munya*, are swung and turned (New : *ikegu*) in time to the rhythm of the music of the ensemble which follows. They are associated with the monkey-god Hanuman and are considered to delight the different deities of the universe, especially Buddha. They are brandished only by the Maharjan and do not exist in the other Newar towns of the Valley. According to the tradition,

there are 17 (or 18) *dhunya* for all Kathmandu, but each quarter of the upper part possesses at least five to ten poles.

The *dhimay* drum is supposed to be one of the oldest musical instruments of the Newars. Contrary to other membranophones, it is apparently purely local and was not brought from India. The Maharjan music teachers assert that the *dhimay* was made "during the time of the gods" and that the Kirants - one of the first mythological dynasties of Kathmandu valley - already played it to drive away tigers (*dhu kya baja*) which at that time lived in large numbers in the country. It is also assumed by the Maharjan that the melody of all Newar musical instruments derives ultimately from the *dhimay baja*, i.e., the music of *dhimay*. According to some authors, this drum dates back to the Licchavi times (5-8th centuries) (6). For them, the *dhimay* and *dhunya* pole are the remnants of ancient Newar martial traditions, "when the Jyapu, whose caste alone plays these instruments, were taken into military service together with the Nay (Butchers)" (7). "It was war music, used in battle ; the thundering drum and the crashing cymbals, heard from a distance, would suggest hundreds of people and thus served to frighten the enemy" (8). Although none of these authors gives firm historical data, there may be some basis to such tradition. The flags hung from the *dhunya* pole are for instance called *vijaya dhvaja*, "the flag of victory," and explicitly symbolize the triumph of the king against his enemies.

Before dealing with the musical activities of this association, it is necessary to introduce Nasah dyah, the Newar god of music and danse. This deity who belongs undoubtedly to the tribal heritage of the Newars, is closely linked with the *dhimay guthi*. He is the main symbolic pillar of the Maharjan quarter and is worshipped before every musical session. Nasah dyah is essentially a formless god, invisible like music. He is represented by simple holes

mostly of triangular shape, in the wall of a shrine or of a private house. These holes may be single or, more often, in sets of three. Each Maharjan quarter possesses a shrine dedicated to Nasah dyah. This sanctuary, which is the ritual focus of the *tvah* group, is always located in a place difficult of access : a small, dark courtyard, a corner. It can be oriented toward different directions. Nasah dyah is nowadays identified with Nritesvar (Nataraja), the dancing Siva, but very few shrine images of him in this form exist in Kathmandu (9).

The members (New : *guthiyar*) of the association gather regularly to worship Nasah dyah and to demonstrate their unity. The meetings generally take place twice a year : on the nine day of Dasain festival (New : *Mahani*) and during winter, either in Magh (January-February), or in Phagun (February-March), a Thursday or a Sunday - two days associated with the god of music. On both occasions, an animal (buffalo, goat or chicken) is sacrificed to Nasah dyah and blood is offered to him (*nasah puja*). The buffalo-horns are often hung from the shrine to please the deity and to commemorate the event. All the members of the quarter must attend the feast which follows the sacrifice, even if they have moved their residence to another quarter or to newer part of city. They can be fined if they are not present. The expenses of the feast are financed by fixed contributions.

The *dhimay* drums, *bhusya* cymbals, and sometimes metal discs, *pomgah* trumpets and *dhunya* poles are kept within a special house called *akhah chē* (New.) located in the precinct of the *tvah*. This music house belongs to a man, the *kaji*, who is in charge of the musical instrument as well as the annual feasts of the association. This person also keeps the group records. His function is handed down from father to son. The *kaji* enjoys a great prestige in the association and is exempted from paying contributions. The drums (between four and ten) are hung from the wali of the largest room of the

house, near a small altar dedicated to Nasah dyah. They are worshipped daily and receive blood every time a sacrifice is offered to Nasah dyah. The *dhimay* drums are indeed cult objects : they are said to be embodiments of the god of music. They are even thought to be one of the lineage deities, *kul*, of the quarter.

The *dhimay* drums occupy a prominent position in most religious processions. They are taken out from the *akhah chē* and played in the streets of Kathmandu (and even beyond) several times a year. During the annual sacrifice to the local Nasah dyah, and domestic ceremonies such as *ihī* mock-marriage of young girls or old-age consecration (*janku*), they are played only in the *tvah* territorial area. But for important urban rituals such as : Pahan cahre (March-April), Seto Matsyendranath jatra (April), Gu punhi (full moon of Saun, July-August), Pacali Bhairava jatra (September-October) and Siga punhi (full moon of Kartik, October-November), they visit other parts of the old town, accompanying processions of deities. During the Indra jatra festival (August-September), the group of *dhimay* players even have to circumambulate the whole historic center of Kathmandu. In addition, the government invites these musicians on official occasions such as the marriage of the crown prince, a coronation, or the visit of a foreign President or Prime Minister. It must be said however that in some quarters (e. g. : Musum Baha), the *mu dhimay*, i.e. the oldest and the most revered drum of the house of music, is not allowed to cross the boundaries of the neighbourhood : it may just proceed towards the local Nasah dyah shrine and then has to come back directly to the *akhah chē*.

The learning of music and the ritual of initiation into the *tvah* group

Dhimay drum apprenticeship plays a vital role in the life of the Maharjan quarter. It occurs every twelve years and concerns all the young Farmer boys of the group from the ages of 9 or 10 to 22 or 23. It is preceded by a collective initiation, called *vahlah coneğu*, during which the young boys spend two days and a night in a shrine located, with one exception, beyond the old boundaries of Kathmandu. Depending on the quarter to which they are attached, the initiates go to Bhadrakali, Pacali Bhairava, Indrayani, Svayambhu, Maiti Devi or Kathe Simbhu (=Siga). The ceremony is repeated for three years. The third year (New : *vahlah dhunkeku*), a Vajracarya Buddhist priest conducts a fire sacrifice *homa* in the deity temple and places a red and yellow *tika* mark on the forehead of all the young boys. The *vahlah coneğu* is organized on the basis of the quarter and is held at fixed dates of the religious calendar. In Bhadrakali's shrine, the initiation takes place a day before Ghode jatra (March-April), in Pacali Bhairava it occurs during Dasain (September-October), in Svayambhu and in Siga on the Kati punhi day (October-November), in Maiti Devi the day of the Laksmi puja (October-November), and in Indrayani on Bal cahre (November-December).

The tuition session (New : *dhimay seņegu*) can then start. It lasts for a period of about three months, covering the greater part of the rainy season. During the first part of the instruction, the young boys gather every evening in the *akhah chē*. Learning is by rote and makes use of drum syllables, i.e., each type of stroke has a proper name which has to be memorized. The drum syllables are chanted in the appropriate rhythm by the teacher and copied by the pupil. Then the teacher plays the composition, and the pupil tries to follow (10). During the second half of the session, the boys

also join together in the morning to learn how to wield the *dhunya* pole and to be trained in some acrobatic postures (of which there are twelve). The tuition being compulsory, all the men belonging to the Maharjan *tvah* know, at least roughly, how to play the *dhimay* drum and to work the *dhunya* pole. A Farmer will be introduced into the *dhimay* *guthi* of his father only after the completion of the session. This admission is of the utmost importance, for membership in the musical association is regarded as the ultimate criterion for rightly claiming membership in the Maharjan quarter group.

The acrobatic and musical apprenticeship goes along with a number of religious ceremonies and offerings to Nasah dyah. The sound of *dhimay*, *dhimay baja*, is thought to be derived from the mouth of the god of music himself. That is why its music is not allowed to be written down, assert the gurus. In fact, from the religious point of view, the teacher's efficacy is limited : it is Nasah dyah who ultimately inspires the acrobats and musicians. The artists derive their ability and their talent directly from him. The preliminary rite, called *kisli tayegu* (New.), is performed on either a Thursday or a Sunday. Its main purpose is to transfer the divine energy of Nasah dyah from his main shrine in the quarter to the small altar located in the practicing room of the *akhah chē*. To this end, the music teachers offer to Nasah dyah a small clay cup of uncooked rice with one betel nut and a coin on top of it. They touch the holes representing the god with this cup (New. : *kisli*) and bring it back to the *akhah chē*. The students, for their part, must bow down in front of Nasah dyah and offer him a chicken.

Twenty days after this preliminary ritual, the teachers perform a *chema puja* in front of Nasah dyah's shrine. It is a pacification ceremony which establishes an adequate relationship between the worshipper and the divinity.

Twenty more days pass and the teachers conduct another rite called *bah puja* in homage to the god of music. This ceremony marks the beginning of the acrobatic and *dhunya* training. The course is completed by a final ritual called *dhimay pidanegu*, during which the students spend a whole night in the *akhah chē* or in the local shrine of Nasah dyah and then sacrifice a goat (or a chicken) to the god of music. Interestingly, this animal has to be stolen by the students sometime during the preceding day. It is said that Nasah dyah will favour his larcenous devotees and may hit those who try to bother them. After the sacrifice, the teachers distribute red and yellow *tika* marks to all their students and relatives. It is believed that Nasah dyah manifests himself personally to the students at the time of this ritual, either by possessing them or by sudden flashes in the lamps which are lit around his shrine.

During the following days or weeks, the teachers and their students visit in procession many temples of Kathmandu or its environs, playing *dhimay*. Until now, the newly initiated members of the quarter played this drum only in the practicing room of the music house. Once the *pidanegu puja* has been completed, they are sufficiently well-trained to perform in public and to play in the streets of the town. In Musum Baha, a quarter belonging to the lower part of Kathmandu, this event is marked ceremonially the next day of *pidanegu* itself. The musical troupe led by *pomgah* trumpets, has to pay a visit to the descendants of the Malla royal family (Thakujaju) of Bhimsenthan and then proceeds towards the Nasah dyah shrine of Hanuman Dhoka, the former royal palace (Nasal chok), where offerings are made. On the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Asvin (September-October), most of the *dhimay guthi* of Kathmandu send their musical ensembles to the shrine of Pacali Bhairava. Four days later, on the eve of Vijayadasami, the groups of musicians visit the three-story temple of the goddess Taleju,

the former royal divinity, in the heart of the city. The next day, some *dhimay* associations go to Pasupatinath and Guhyesvari. About a month later, at the full moon of Kartik (October-November), the groups pay a visit to Svayambhu, the most sacred place of Newar Mahayanism.

It is clear from these ethnographic observations that music and acrobatics play a most active role in the socialization of the young Maharjan boys. A Farmer will be integrated into his basic group, the *tvah*, only after completing the *vahlah conegu* initiation and the apprenticeship of *dhimay*. Once these ceremonies have been performed, he must observe all caste restrictions on pain of losing his own caste status. He has to refrain from eating pork and he must take only pure food from people of castes higher than his. He may not take water from or allow himself to be touched by untouchable castes or menstruating women. In other words, he becomes a full member of his caste, ritually and morally responsible for his own actions.

This drum is thus an essential element in promoting solidarity within the quarter and in maintaining the distinctiveness of the Maharjan community. In the colloquial language, *dhimay* is even used as a synonymous term for the Farmer's caste (11). But there is more : the structure of the Maharjan quarters of Kathmandu mirrors that of the *dhimay guthi* groups. Here music is obviously an organizational principle of society and residence. It is an integral part of the basic Maharjan network of social ties and of their reproduction. Without *dhimay*, the local quarter group cannot exist and cannot claim to exist. This drum represents, identifies and unifies the social group. As a cult object attached to men, it also emphasizes the antiquity of the musical association : as noted, it is a figure of ancestry.

Oddly enough, this pattern is confined to Kathmandu. Although music plays a prominent role in all Newar settlements and is closely related to social or religious activities among every Newar caste, it supports the whole social structure only in the present day capital of Nepal. In Bhaktapur and Patan, the Farmers do possess *dhimay* drums, but the associations in charge of these instruments, *dhimay khala* or *dhimay manka*, are open to other castes or do not command the territorial division of the city as in Kathmandu (12). In these two other urban settlements, the *dhimay* groups do not function as *guthi* and their membership remains optional : a man will always have the possibility of changing his affiliation from one association to another.

Kinship and marriage

The *tvah* social grouping is neither a lineage nor a clan. Its members are not able to trace kin links among themselves in the direct line, and they do not see themselves as having all descended from a common male ancestor. They are divided into several unnamed patrilineages (New : *kavā*) characterized by their shallowness. A lineage generally encompasses from four to twelve households that are separated but still live near each other. Among these kinsmen, the Maharjan distinguish two degrees of agnatic links : 1) - up to the third generation, the close agnates, *phuki* ; 2) - from the fourth up to the fifth generation, the distant agnates, *jhinu*. As a rule, a lineage includes all the *phuki* kinsmen and some *jhinu*. After six generations, and sometimes even before, the memory of the genealogical links vanishes and the group splits up. Quarrels and migrations contribute to the process of fragmentation whereby a single lineage group splinters into new autonomous *kavā*. This corresponds more or less to the matrimonial prohibitions. Ideally, it is not permissible to marry in the paternal line within seven generations and in the maternal line within three. In practice

some marriages do occur with closer relatives if there is a "good reason" for the alliance in question, but such cases are exceptional since most of the kinsmen, whether close or distant, belong to the same exogamous *tvah*.

These kinship units are mainly ritual units. The agnatic kinsmen have first of all to observe birth and death pollution rules for each other. Let us consider for instance death, which entails numerous prescriptions. All the kinsmen of the patriline must participate in the funeral procession towards the cremation ground (New : *sana vanigu*) and mourn (New : *dukha conegu*) for at least twelve days. Accordingly, they have to wear a white cap and non-leather shoes. They also have to abstain from eating meat in their house but surprisingly enough, they are allowed to take meat outside their house and to join festive meals if they are invited. Whereas the *jhinu* respect these prohibitions for twelve days, that is untill the *ghahsu* funeral ceremony, the *phuki* will remain polluted for forty-five days. The closest relatives of the dead person, for their part, remain impure for a whole year.

Yet the main way in which the lineage expresses its unity is through its deity cult. Each *kavā* possesses its own deity, Digu dyah, which is represented by natural uncarved stones. These stones are located outside of the old town wall boundaries, on a meadow. They are worshipped once a year in Baisakh (April-Mai), sometimes twice a year : in Baisakh and in Bhadau (August-September), at the time of the festival of Indra. In the case of segmentation within the lineage, the newly formed kin-groups will still propitiate the same sacred stones, in the same spot, but they will go at different times. They have become *ba-phuki*, "split-agnates" : although sharing a common ancestral deity, they no longer form a ritual unit and do not share the birth and death pollution of the other split-off group. As a rule, a quarter

includes different open places for their lineage deities. Notably enough, these lithic Digu dyah are not revered the rest of the year. Yet, some kinship groups also have iconic representations of the lineage deity which are worshipped daily by their caretakers. Such statues are stored either turn by turn among the kinsmen or in the *thakali's* house. They are carried in procession to the relevant open altar of Digu dyah, outside the city, during the annual worship of the deity. The two forms, iconic and aniconic, refer to the same god - whose name, most of the time, is kept secret.

Although they do not form a kin-group, the members of a *tvah* regard themselves as vaguely consanguineous. They consider each other to be *daju-bhai*, "elder brother-younger brother". "To be affiliated with the same quarter, a Maharjan told us, is equivalent to belonging to the same family" (*parivar*). The *dhimay* drums, which are worshipped as one of the lineage deities of the group, reinforce this feeling. The *tvah* possibly originates from an old original kinship unit of which the ancient lineal ties have been lost through the centuries. But, more probably, territoriality (attachment to a given place) and consanguinity played an equal role in the making of such groupings. As in other parts of the world, common residence has here created fictive kinship links. However that may be, the Maharjan *tvah* is rigorously exogamous. Marriage within the quarter social grouping is forbidden. If somebody breaks this rule, he will be expelled from his *tvah* as well as from his lineage. Exogamy also concerns the families who have moved from their original ancestral neighbourhood. A Maharjan will remain a Wotumi, a Wanghami - from the name of his quarter - being still bound by the rules of his group, even if he has settled beyond the old town. To sum up, the quarter is a social unit which remains active and corporate even if the residential links disappear or splinter after a migration. On the other hand, a Farmer can marry a

Maharjan girl living in the same quarter as him if she does not belong to the same original *tvah*.

As previously indicated, the Maharjan of Kathmandu marry mainly among themselves. They are extremely reluctant to contract a marriage with Farmers from rural areas and other Newar towns. As one informant pointed out, "We all belong to the same caste, but our customs are too different". In fact, the Maharjan of the capital feel themselves to be superior to all other Farmers. To marry a girl from outside will entail a loss of reputation, *ijjat*, within the community. It must be said that this group has developed a very sophisticated and urbanized way of life as compared with the Maharjan of Bhaktapur and Patan whose manners remain more rustic. Furthermore, in contrast with village Farmers, intermarriages with Srestha Traders are very rare. However rich he may be, the Maharjan of Kathmandu takes great pride in being a Farmer and displays a strong attachment to his caste. To become Srestha through an upward intercaste alliance is alien to his way of thinking.

Segmentation and peculiar cases

To turn back to the territorial organization, some *dhimay* musical grouping have split up during the last three decades on account of internal quarrels. Three cases may be mentioned : Tha Bahi (=Thamel), Naypaco-Phasigā and Bhindyah (=Bhimsenthan). In Tha Bahi, the division goes back to the early seventies. It was due to a marriage between two members of the *tvah*. A small group of the association stood up for the couple and refused the excommunication pronounced by the Elders. This minority seceded and established its own *guthi*. Accordingly, the quarter today includes two *dhimay* musical associations, each one possessing its own music house. However, the two groups still worship the same Nasah dyah shrine. Though the Maharjan of Tha Bahi nowadays consider

that their locality is made up of two different *tvah*, the two groups do not intermarry. In Naypaco-Phasigā, the segmentation evolved in two stages. The Maharjan of Phasigā first separated from Naypaco and then divided one more time among themselves. The present three offshoot *dhimay guthi* are totally independent for ritual purposes. Yet, as in the previous instance, they still forbid their members to marry each other.

Asā, one of the most important and ancient crossroads of Kathmandu, presents another picture. This *tvah* split up long time ago into two units : Bhotahity Kisani and Kamalachi Pilatu (=Konay *tvah*), corresponding to two well-demarcated kinship groups. Only the first one possesses a *dhimay guthi*. The two groups worship the god of music separately, at two different cult-sites. However, they exchange their musical ensembles during the various religious festivals and walk in procession behind the same *dhunya* bamboo pole. Traditionally, marriages between the two groups were prohibited, but some years ago Bhotahity Kisani and Kamalachi Pilatu started intermarrying. The small size of the associations (17 and 18 members respectively) undoubtedly explains this peculiar situation.

In spite of the modernization which is rapidly transforming the urban landscape, and notwithstanding the growing fashion for new types of music, Western or Indian, among the younger generation, the traditional music groups are still very active and continue to exert social control over their members. The Maharjan of Kathmandu are still attached to these old structures, presumably because they help maintain their identity in an urban, developing world. However, in Duga Bahi, a *tvah* located near the building of the Royal Nepal Airline Corporation, the *dhimay* association disappeared in the early eighties. Although the rule of exogamy is still in force, the quarter group has lost its emblematic drums. The

Nasah dyah shrine is nowadays deserted and the *akhah chē* has been sold to an outsider. Such cultural losses are likely to occur in other neighbourhoods. The accelerated urban expansion of Kathmandu is a serious threat for the socio-religious framework of the whole city.

The *tvah* as spatial unit

We estimate that the total population of Maharjan in Kathmandu is about 20.000 persons (5 % of the total inhabitants of the capital). These Farmers primarily inhabit the old Newar town, and are mainly located in the south (13). It is in this part that the most important concentration of Maharjan's population is found (see map n° 1), and that the social and spatial structures of the *tvah* are still in harmony.

This is the case in Musum Baha. Although constant arrivals and departures, most of the members of the 300 households still live here. But whether these people go to another part of Kathmandu or not, the social rules are still alive. Even migrants remain affiliated, as we have seen before, with their original *tvah*, especially to the Nasah *guthi*. These communal ties linking a man with his original quarter points to the notion of territory. People belonging to other castes also come to settle in this quarter. Looking at these changes in population, one is prompted to ask : what remains of the territory which no longer shelters its primeval population ? Before trying to answer this question, we shall define the spatial unit itself : what is a *tvah* in Kathmandu ?

To answer this question, we shall identify the elements invariably existing in all *tvah*. We shall see next how the Maharjan themselves define the boundaries of the *tvah*. Then, on a smaller scale, we shall focus on the repartition of

these quarters in the town. Last, we shall study the role of the Maharjan in the urban milieu.

The determinant elements of the *tvah*.

The *tvah* in Kathmandu can be defined by several elements which are found in all of them. In particular, these elements are temples and divinities who are worshipped daily or occasionally by the population of the quarter.

- As shown above, *the shrine of Nasah dyah*, the divinity of music, is linked with the Nasah *guthi*. Nasah's shrines are often situated in places which are difficult to find, like courtyards or back alleys. In each *tvah* there is one shrine of Nasah dyah, with two exceptions :

- Phasigā, a *tvah* located in the southern part of Kathmandu, does not have a Nasah dyah of its own. The Maharjan population of this *tvah* worship the Nasah dyah of Naypaco, a neighbouring *tvah*. But, twenty years ago Naypaco and Phasigā were just one. Nowadays, even though they have split into two *tvah*, they share the same shrine of Nasah dyah.

- Wanghah (Indrachok) has three shrines of Nasah, one for each musical group (*dhimay*, *dapha* (14), *pomgah*).

All the other *tvah* possess only one Nasah dyah. *Pujas* for worshipping this divinity do not take place very often (only two or three times a year), but the whole population of the *tvah* gather on these occasions. It is not necessary to increase the number of shrines, since the people only visit them occasionally.

- *The temple of Gane dyah* . Ganesh also receives the

dyah, Ganesh is worshipped every morning. Most of the time, there are several temples of Ganesh in each *tvah*, but one is always more important than the others. This is called *Tvah Gane dyah*, the Ganesh of the *tvah*. For some reasons of convenience, the whole population of one *tvah* does not go to the *Tvah Gane Dyah* every morning. But, on *Ganesh Jatra*, everybody worships *Tvah Gane dyah*.

These two divinities, Gane and Nasah dyah, are the most significant for the *tvah* (see map n° 2).

- *The place of Chvasa dyah*. This divinity has no temple. Instead, it is often represented by a hole in public places like streets or crossroads. The people of the *tvah* put, for example, the clothes of dead people at this very place. Unlike Nasah or Ganesh temples, there can be two Chvasa of equal importance if the *tvah* is very big.
- *The place of Kolā dyah*. This is the place where people used to throw the remains of funeral meals. Like Chvasa dyah, this divinity has no temple or iconic form.
- *The place of Luku Maha dyah*. Luku Maha dyah is a protector divinity symbolized by sunken stones. Sometimes these stones are located more than one meter under the street, like at Ombahal. They are excavated during *Ghode Jatra* to allow people to deposit offerings. Like Chvasa dyah, there is at least one Luku Maha dyah in each *tvah*, but if the *tvah* is large, it can possess several.
- *Akhah chē*. The last important place for the *tvah* is the house (*akhah chē*) where the *dhimay* are kept when they are not used. Usually there are two *akhah chē* in one *tvah* (one for *dhimay*, one for *dapha*), and the *akhah chē* of *dhimay* cannot be moved. This house plays an important role during the acrobatic and musical apprenticeship.

These elements are constant from one *tvah* to another. Sometimes there are exceptions but the reasons for them have been forgotten.

To be identified as a *tvah* by the Maharjan, the quarter must have the above mentioned different shrines or sacred places. The concentration of religious monuments gives a very important symbolic charge to this territorial unit.

After identifying common elements, we tried to define the boundaries of the *tvah* with the help of the Farmers.

Urban reference marks used by the Maharjan to define their quarter.

The urban marks (15) used as boundaries by the Maharjan can be divided into 4 classes :

- *Names of quarters* : 41.
- *Names of temples* : 30 or of *bahal* : 11. Five names of *tvah* are also names of *bahal* (16).
- *Names of other urban marks* : 13. Those are mostly buildings with public functions, but the Vishnumati River also falls into this category.
- *Names of main roads*: 20. Seven of them are described by one of the places to which they lead. Five of these places are religious.

- *Names of quarters.*

A third of the answers are names of neighbouring quarters. Perhaps this is the result of the survey itself : the topic was quarters and the easiest way to locate one's own is in relation to another. 24 of the 41 names of quarters are other Maharjan *tvah*. The Farmers of the southern part of Kathmandu seem to

use this traditional division almost exclusively, but in the upper part of the town, the references vary much more : half of the names used are not Maharjan *tvah*.

To define a quarter with regard to a neighbouring one gives us a vague idea of its location but not of its extent or boundaries. The information is not precise but maybe it corresponds with the feeling Maharjan have for their quarters. It is difficult to discuss this notion at the present stage of the study.

• *Names of temples and bahal.*

This category represents a third of the answers. It seems as important for the Maharjan to locate themselves with regard to the divinities as with regard to human beings. This category includes names of precise places which allow us to know, from the Maharjan point of view, how far the *tvah* extends. This kind of boundary is not a linear one, but rather a bounding landmark which is sometimes far from the places people live. We have no information about how one landmark is linked to another. They are linked to residences by religious observances. More than boundaries, this category seems to give us ends of routes.

These reference marks give us a new vision of the *tvah*. It is not only a compact area surrounded by other quarters or *tvah*. Nor it is just where the Maharjan live. Some religious places which are more or less far from where the population lives, are essential. The *tvah* becomes bigger, stretched in one direction or another by these religious buildings. Although the answers of this category are very different than the answers of the first one, they are not in opposition. In fact they complement each other. The Maharjan *tvah* is defined by human marks (the places where men live), and sacred marks (the places where human are connected with the

divinities). Some of these divine references are located on the fringe of the *tvah*.

- ***The other urban marks.***

The marks belonging to this third category are not religious references. They are new buildings (between one hundred and 150 years old) and are used either because they are prominent in the landscape or well known. Examples include Durbar School, Bir Hospital, the R.N.A.C. Building and the National Theater. All these marks are in the upper part of town.

The Vishnumati River, which borders Kathmandu on the west, and the former royal palace (Basantapur/Hanuman Dhoka) can also be included in this category. When an urban mark without religious character was used by the Maharjan of the southern part of the town to delimit their *tvah*, it was one of these two marks. These two are remarkable points of the city of Kathmandu already: the Vishnumati was the western extremity of the city and Hanuman Dhoka was the heart.

As with the names of quarters, attachment to traditional marks is again more evident in the southern part of Kathmandu than in the northern one. In the south, urban marks do not change ; only few transformations are visible in the landscape.

- ***Main roads and alleys.***

This category includes two types of roads : the main roads, which give Kathmandu its main directions, and alleys, which the Maharjan speak of in a different manner.

The main roads (New Road, Kalimati Road, Kantipath, etc.) change their function when we change our scale. At the town scale, they link distant places, but at the scale of the quarter, they become divisive elements. They are too large compared to the size of the quarter. They become real limits and as such cannot belong to one *tvah*.

Alleys, which do not always have precise names, are identified by one of the places which they lead to, most of the time, a religious place (17). The Farmers do not speak about a temple itself, but about the road which leads to it ; for example, the *gali* (18) which leads to the Nasah dyah's shrine. The importance of these streets is not in their size but in the symbolism with which they are charged. Unlike the main roads, their role is to link elements belonging to the same quarter. They are the ties between the places the Maharjan live and the religious landmarks we mentioned earlier.

This category of linear marks again is marked by a difference in the traditionalism of the upper and the lower parts of Kathmandu. All but one of the roads that the Maharjan of the southern part mentioned, (and they are very few), belong to the second type. (The main road from Tripureswar to Kalimati is the only exception). Generally speaking, roads are not used by the Farmers to delimit their territory. They were given as only 20 marks of 120. This leads us to believe that the *tvah* is not well defined in space. If a rigorous demarcation does exist, it does not seem important to the Maharjan.

The analysis of these boundaries or urban marks throws a light on the way the Maharjan visualize their territory. In our present state of knowledge, we can say that the notion of *tvah* for the Maharjan seems to be more a question of perception than a question of space clearly defined. The

Maharjan *tvah* consists of a place of residence where houses often center around one or several courtyards called *nani*, of temples located in this area or next to it, and of roads of different sizes usually leading to these places of worship. The name of the quarter is known outside the quarter, but this does not mean that the boundaries are more precise.

In the above paragraphs, we maintain that there is a difference between the southern (lower) and the northern (upper) parts of Kathmandu. We will now turn to this partition of the town.

Repartition of the "32 tols" in Kathmandu

- *Upper part, Lower part, Central part*

In the lists published by Nepali authors, the 32 Maharjan *tols* are divided into three parts :

- > The upper part : *Thahne*

- > The middle part : *Dathu*

- > The lower part : *Kone*

In the list of R. K. Vajracharya (19), the *tvah* are distributed in the following way :

- > 9 *tvah* in *Thahne*

- > 11 *tvah* in *Dathu*

- > 12 *tvah* in *Kone*

Some reasons prevent us from adopting this classification :

- First, the list of R. K. Vajracharya and our recently established list do not correspond. As we have seen above, some changes have occurred.

- Second, it seems that nowadays, for most people, the middle part of the town is not very significant. In fact, only the Maharjan of Maru state that they belong to *Dathu*. How then can we distribute the ten other *tvah* of *Dathu* between the

northern and the southern parts of the city ? For this we have some criteria to help us.

- The boundary which separates the upper and the lower part of Kathmandu passes between the two lions standing in front of Taleju's temple at Hanuman Dhoka and then follows New Road.

- For some people, this boundary is connected with the *masan* (the place where the dead persons are burnt). The Maharjan of the lower part use Teku as their cremation ground and the ones of the upper part mostly Luti Ajima. Only four *tvah*: Maru, Yatakha, Makhā and Maga, are not concerned with these two *masan* (see map n° 3).

- The third criterion is the tutelary divinity of the *tvah*. For the most part, the *tvah* of *Thahne* worship *Ajima* or some *Aju* and the *tvah* of *Kone* worship Pacali Bhairav.

- The last criterion used for this partition is possessing *dhunya* or not. All the *tvah* of *Thahne* have a *dhunya* except Walachi which does not because of its divinity Narsing (20) ; none of the *tvah* of the lower part have this pole.

If we try to organize our list of *tvah* according to these criteria, we face the following problems :

The Farmers of **Ombahal** say that they belong to *Kone* (south). This *tvah* in fact is located south of New Road and Taleju's temple. Their cremations do take place in Teku and their divinity is Pacali. However, they have *dhunya*, like *tvah* in the northern part.

The Maharjan of **Pukhudyā** possess their own divinity, Bhadrakali, and *dhunya*, and report that they belong to *Thahne*. But the cremation ground of the Farmers of this *tvah*

is in Teku and they are located south of New Road. These last two points associate Pukhudyā with the lower part of the town. **Kohiti** is a *tvah* which belongs to the southern part of Kathmandu, but it has its own divinity, Nil Varahi.

Using the above criteria, the list of 28 *tvah* we have established can be distributed as follows (The exceptional cases itemized above are categorized according to what the Farmers reported) [see table 1 & 2 and map n° 2] :

Thahne : Asan, Chwasalubi, Dugā Bahi, Jamo, Kilaga, Kusu Biyalachi, Kwa Baha, Maga, Mahabauddha, Makhā, Nyeta, Pukudyā, Tha Bahi, Tyauda, Waghah, Walachi, Wotu, Yatakha.

Dathu : Maru.

Kone : Bakachē, Bhindyah, Kohiti, Musum Baha, Naypaco, Om Baha, Tokā Baha, Yangal, Yutu Nani.

The stronger unity of the southern *tvah* is illustrated by the fact that the *tvah* formerly included in *Dathu* all joined the upper part. In spite of the transformations in the northern part, *Kone* remains more traditional.

• *Inside, Outside*

The *tvah* can also be divided into those inside and those outside the city wall built during the Malla period. The Maharjan declare their quarters to be outside or inside the gates of the city (new : *dhoka pine/ dhoka dune*). Of our list of 28 *tvah*, only three of them are outside : Tha Bahi, Jamo and Maga.

Tha Bahi is the northernmost *tvah* of Kathmandu. The original Maharjan population still lives in this area (126

households). In spite of a division among themselves which took place twenty years ago, the social structure is still alive. Its territory, its population, its local associations (musical and others) and its temples (Nasah dyah, Gane dyah) are all intact. The only difference is that it is located beyond the gates of Kathmandu.

The other two *tvah*, Jamo and Maga, are similar in that they both lost their territories. The territory of *Jamo* was originally situated north of Rani Pokhari, between Kantipath and Durbar Marg, in the present Seto Durbar. The Maharjan who were living there were turned out when Bir Shumsher Rana built the palaces of Seto Durbar, Lal Durbar, Phora Durbar and Narayan Hiti, at the end of the last century. Most of the inhabitants of Jamo settled inside the city of Kathmandu. Nowadays there are 100 households, most of them located at Kosi Bahal, Tyauda, Kamalachi and Basundhara (between Balaju and Bansbari). They belong to the same *tvah*, but they have spread into different areas of the city. They lost their territorial unit ; nevertheless they keep their own divinities for festivals. For example, the *Tvah Gane Dyah* is in Kamaladi. They do not worship Ganesh at this temple every morning because it is too far away from their homes. They visit other secondary shrines of Ganesh nearer their houses. But during their main festival, they go and carry the statue of the Gane dyah of their own *tvah*.

Although the Jamo's inhabitants now live inside the city, this *tvah* is considered to be outside of the city.

Concerning **Maga**, the story is a little bit more complicated. The original territory of this *tvah* is near the area of Bhotahiti. Years ago, the population went to Maga (Maligaon), 2 km east of the city. This *tvah* is composed of *Mu* people, a sub-group of the Maharjan caste. These Farmers are

connected with Talēju and are in charge of cultivating the six kinds of flowers used during the goddess' cult. They left Kathmandu because of the lack of space and the care required for this work.

According to Sina Bhai Munikar, a Mu of Bhotahiti, the Mu split into two groups : one remained in Bhotahiti and the other one went to Maga. The social institutions were also divided : the *dhimay guthi* went to Maga and the *dapha khola* remained in Bhotahiti. Nowadays all the determinant elements of the *tvah* (Nasah dyah's shrine, Gane dyah's shrine, *Akhañ chē*) are located outside of the city. Of the 62 current households, 16 still live in Maga. The two other important places where the Mu live now are Maiti and Bhotahiti (12 and 10 households respectively) ; the rest have spread out over Kathmandu and are found in Jyatha, Damaitol, Lainchaur or Siphali.

This *tvah* has a territory (Maga) which is not its original one (Bhotahiti), but all the elements of the *tvah* have been transferred. Nevertheless, some connections between Bhotahiti and Maga are still alive : every year during *Lakṣmi puja*, the Mu carry the statue of their divinity, Maiti devi, to Bhotahiti.

The study of these *Dhoka pine tvah* would not be complete without speaking about **Kwa Bahal**. We did not mention this *tvah* earlier because the population declares itself to be inside the city. But, if we look at the remains of the Malla wall, in M. Slusser's *Nepal Mandala* (21) for example, we can see that the northern boundary of the wall is in Thahiti. Kwa Bahal is located north of Thahiti square. The Maharjan say that Thahiti is the southern boundary of their *tvah*. We can say though that all the temples and sacred places of the *tvah* are situated inside the city. Taking the religious places and

not the residences as roots for the *tvah*, we understand the population's feeling of belonging to the city.

Let us now study the evolution of the Maharjan population and which role the Farmers play in the town.

- *Spatial evolution*

One distinct characteristic of the Maharjan population is to belong to and to remain attached to a territory by the association of *Nasah* (*Nasah guthi*). Today, however, the harmony between the social and the spatial structures is very often broken for different reasons :

- Quarrels between the inhabitants, as we saw above.
- The price of land, which has been steadily increasing in the capital over the last two or three decades. In Ombahal, for example, 30 years ago one *ropani* (22) of land cost 15.000 Rupies ; nowadays the same area costs about 1.500.000 or 2.000.000 Rupies. Renting houses and speculating have become good ways to earn money. The Maharjan move outside of Kathmandu and rent or sell their houses in the city. One of the worst cases is in Makhā *tvah*, where only two original Maharjan families are still living. All the other families have moved elsewhere.
- Lack of space in the *tvah* is also a reason for departure. Yutu nani, for example, is a very small *tvah*. There is only one courtyard. 40 families live here and there is no more room. 65 families have gone to settle outside.

The importance of the Maharjan :
different contributions

- *In the tvah*

The Farmers play an important role in the *tvah*, especially during several local festivals. The whole population of the

quarter gathers at that time. This is the case in a ritual called *mara ja nakegu*, usually celebrated after the rice harvest. The Maharjan have to cook the newly harvested rice and have to feed all the children living in the quarter, even if they are of higher castes. Besides giving offerings daily, people worship Ganesh (*Tvah Gane dyah*) once a year. The festival of Nasah dyah is usually celebrated twice a year. During these festivals, the Maharjan have to play music with *dhimay*.

The responsibility of the Farmers extends to other fields as well. The *nayo*, a kind of administrator for the *tvah*, is often chosen from the Maharjan caste. He has to solve disputes between persons who live in the quarter. He is responsible for most of the work undertaken on the local level and is paid by the *guthi*. This hereditary function held by the Maharjan shows the power that they have in the *tvah*. In a way, it is a reflection of the fact that they were the first settlers in the *tvah*.

- *In the town*

The Maharjan people also have responsibilities which concern the whole town. We find the same duties on the town level as on the *tvah* level. The Farmers who play music during the *pujas* of the *tvah* also play music for the *jatra* involving all of Kathmandu. Some of these festivals involve the Maharjan's divinities, and in them, the division between the upper and lower part of the city is emphasized. The Maharjans play a role in the following three major festivals of Kathmandu :

- During *Pahā Carhe* (*Ghode jatra*), *Ajimas* of *Thahne* are carried around by in large in the upper part of Kathmandu and to some other closely related *tvah*.

- During *panchami* of Dasain, the festival of Pacali Bhairav, (the divinity of *Kone*), the pot which symbolizes the god is carried around mostly in the southern part.
- During Indra *jatra*, the Farmers are mainly associated with Indra and Bhairava cults. They play *dhimay* as well as other drums when these two gods are celebrated.

The Maharjan also hold responsibilities in other fields.

- They have to put narrow temporary bridges over the rivers during the winter. The bridges are put up during the festival of Tihar on the day of *mha puja* and taken down during Bal Carhe (November-December). The bridges over the Bagmati River are put up by the Maharjan of Wotu and Thanani ; the ones over the Visnumati are built by the Farmers of Nyeta and Asan Kamalachi Pilatu.
- The Maharjan have also to clean two wells of the town during rain-making rituals.
 - > One, *Japatu* (Bhara Barsa Inar), is located in *Kone*, at Musum Baha ;
 - > The other one is in *Thahne*, in Asan Kamalachi *Pilatu*.

These paragraphs summarize the main contributions of the Maharjan to the town and to the Newar urban community. As a matter of fact, the Farmers play a prominent role, especially in religious events.

The *tvah* : a symbolic spatial unit

Unlike the administrative way of dividing Kathmandu into 35 wards (23), of which the common element is, for instance, the municipality office, the *tvah* cannot be defined by administrative references. Besides, the *tvah* has no functional value with regard to the Farmers traditional activities. Those who still cultivate the land are not the

owners of the land. Most of Maharjan are tenants. Thus, they work at different places, spread out all around the town and not in one area as we might have expected. Some associations and labour exchange for production exist, but they are based on the location of the fields and not on adherence to a *tvah*. The *tvah* does not organize agricultural production. Even though Farmers do dry their harvests in public spaces of the *tvah*, this is more a question of convenience than of working together. Presently, the *tvah* is linked neither with the economy nor with the current administration. It is a purely social organization highly visible in the administratively oriented urban landscape. Even though the *tvah* are slowly disappearing because of changes in society, they still remain strong in their ritual role and in their organization of *guthi*. These two cultural elements allow the Maharjan quarter to survive. It is through the various festivals which take place in the old city that the *tvah* division is still visible.

Conclusion

As pointed out by N. Gutschow, trade obviously played a prominent rôle in the genesis and growth of Kathmandu (24). The city has greatly profited from its key location along the Trans-Himalayan road. Since the beginning of the first millennium A.D., its rise is linked with large movements of goods and persons from Tibet to India, and vice-versa. Buddhist Mahayana monasteries also stand as a crucial factor in the development of the urban fabric : up to the present day, these religious centers constitute major landmarks in the symbolism of the city and mirror the overall spatial arrangement of the urban settlement. Yet, our case study clearly reveals that a third element, namely the urban Farmers, has to be taken into account when dealing with the history of Kathmandu. Maharjan are an outstanding feature and an integral part of the Newar cityscape. Such a role

undoubtedly goes back to the very origin of the town. It is convenient at this point to sum up some of our findings in this respect.

The Maharjan of Kathmandu are closely associated with a cylindrical drum which is one of the oldest musical instruments of the Newars and is supposed not to have been borrowed from outside. It is surely not by accident that this instrument has been chosen by the Maharjan to embody their identity and to strengthen their social organization. Farmers are also the caretakers (if not the priests) of the main temples of the city. Interestingly enough, among these temples we find deities who, like the god of music Nasah dyah, belong to the oldest heritage of Newar culture and have been incorporated only later on into the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon. The cult of the Ajima, perhaps also of Aju dyah (with the curious emphasis on beer pots), are instructive in this connection. Besides, Maharjan are linked with the foundation of some major temples and/or deities of Kathmandu (Janmadyah, Indra), and a detailed analysis of Newar royal rituals - beyond the scope of this paper - would illuminate the relevance of Farmers for kingship. All this points to far remote origins in the indigenous Valley past. We are no doubt facing remnants of an old, maybe the most archaic stratum of Kathmandu. Considering all these factors, we reach the conclusion that the Maharjan are among the oldest dwellers, if not *the* oldest dwellers of the city. Further proof of this can be found in the control that Farmers exert over the symbolic space by guiding communal processions within the settlement.

This complex set of ethnographic data corroborates the hypothesis that Kathmandu developed from a number of separate villages which, in time, grew together. Obviously, the present unified structure of the old part of the city is a recent phenomenon. It can be traced back roughly to Ratna Malla, in the 15th century, and to the building of a royal palace in the center of the city. The lower half of Kathmandu

still has its own urban fabric, its own temples (Pacali Bhairav), and its own religious practices differing slightly from those of the upper half. It constitutes a world unto itself. There is good reason to believe that this area was incorporated into the city proper at a later stage.

Kathmandu, or more properly traditional Kathmandu, can therefore be categorized as a "rural city" or an "agro-town". Although confronting the ways and means of twentieth century modernity, the city preserves some traces of its (at least partly) rural origins. In addition, the capital of Nepal is also characterized by the persistence of family structures pertaining to the village landscape. As indicated, the lineage still forms an important locus of identification for the urban Maharjan and it is still associated with important ceremonies. Recent ethnographic evidence shows that the same situation is at work in other Newar towns and among other Newar urban castes (25). As a matter of fact, there is no sharp difference between urban and rural social structure within Newar civilization. We must admit that cities are much more multicaste in nature and express the fullest development of the caste system under the direction of a king. But as far as the internal structure of the caste is concerned, the continuum is noteworthy. Urban and village studies point to the same basic social determinants : hierarchical order based on pure and impure, the seniority principle, the paramount importance of the *guthi* association system, shallowness of kinship units, closeness of residence units, particular relevance of territorial and blood-drinking deities, etc. In both worlds, the system within which the activity occurs and which makes it meaningful is a religious system. Even architecture and habitat are almost identical : both are clearly organized by a similar network of paths and nodes with religious buildings playing a primary role.

Nevertheless, there is a notable difference between Kathmandu and village Maharjan. One of the most striking

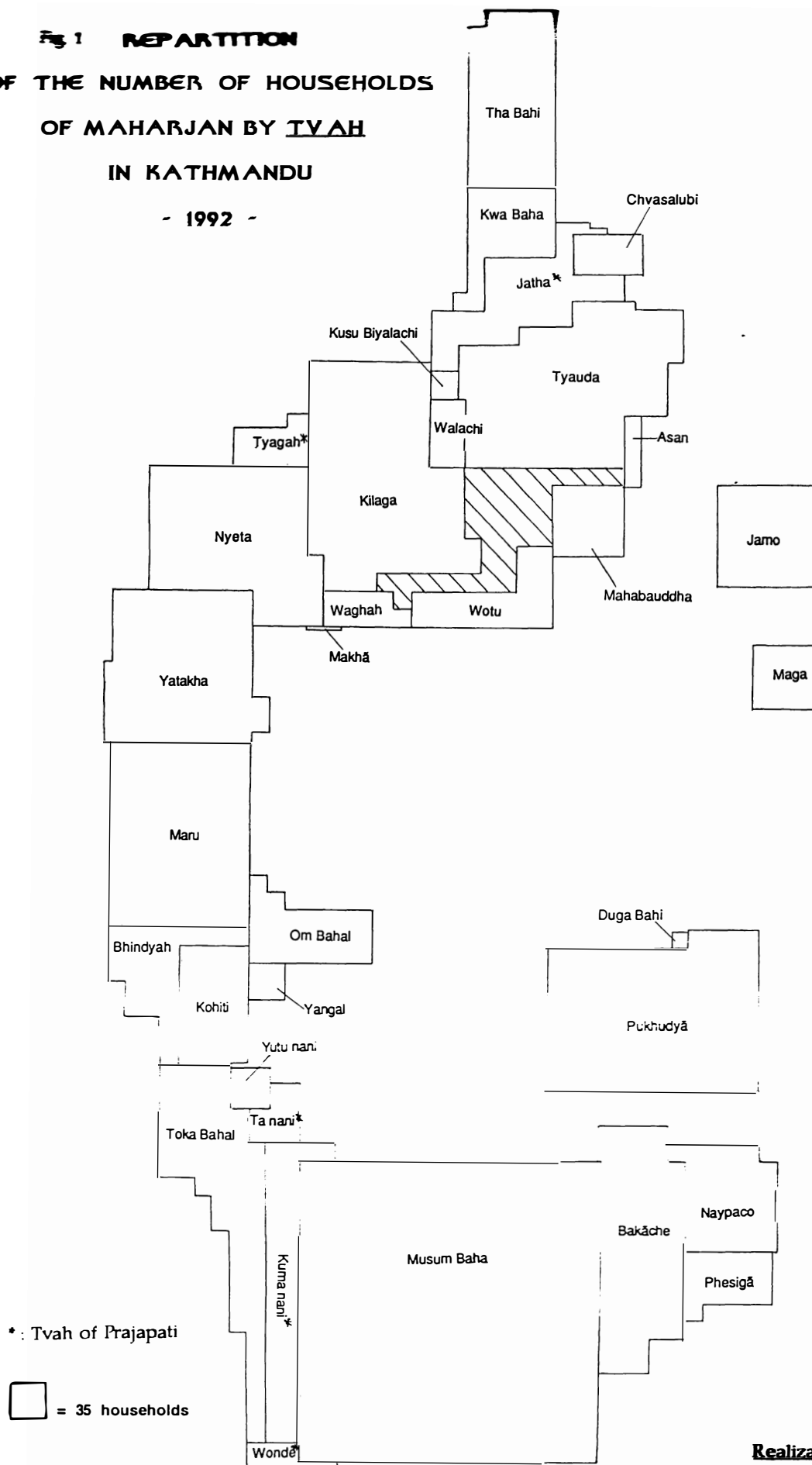
features of the social organization of Kathmandu's Farmers is the rigid insistence on exogamy at the quarter level. Now, the opposite is true in rural areas. As a rule, the Newar Maharjan village is mostly endogamous. Sometimes, such endogamy is reinforced by strict regulations. It is consequently inaccurate to speak of a "village in the city". Sociologically, the two residence units operate along different lines. What happens in Kathmandu is that the territorially-based quarter social groupings are endowed with marital functions (exogamy) to the detriment of kinship groups. The consanguineal bond does not disappear, but it is more or less swallowed by the territorial unit. In other words, the Farmer quarter within the city is not like an isolated cell, secluded from the outside. It is outwardly-oriented. Emphasis is put on links with the other Maharjan *tvah* of the city.

The remarkable thing is that such a pattern is restricted to Kathmandu. In Patan and Bhaktapur, the two other large Newar towns, the Maharjan belonging to one quarter do not form an exogamous unit : they can marry among themselves provided no consanguineal ties can be traced. The endogamous/ exogamous opposition does not therefore coincide with the village/city dichotomy. The peculiar situation prevailing in Kathmandu may perhaps be explained by the modest size of its Maharjan community compared with the whole population of the city. What we are suggesting here is that this group opted for such a complex system, with corresponding exogamy, to retain and strengthen its internal unity within an urban settlement where it was becoming more and more a minority. In danger of being absorbed or totally dominated by other castes, Farmers enacted exogamous regulations, establishing an active network among the "32 *tvah*" of the city. No one can doubt that the present vitality of the Maharjan community springs from this arrangement.

May 1992

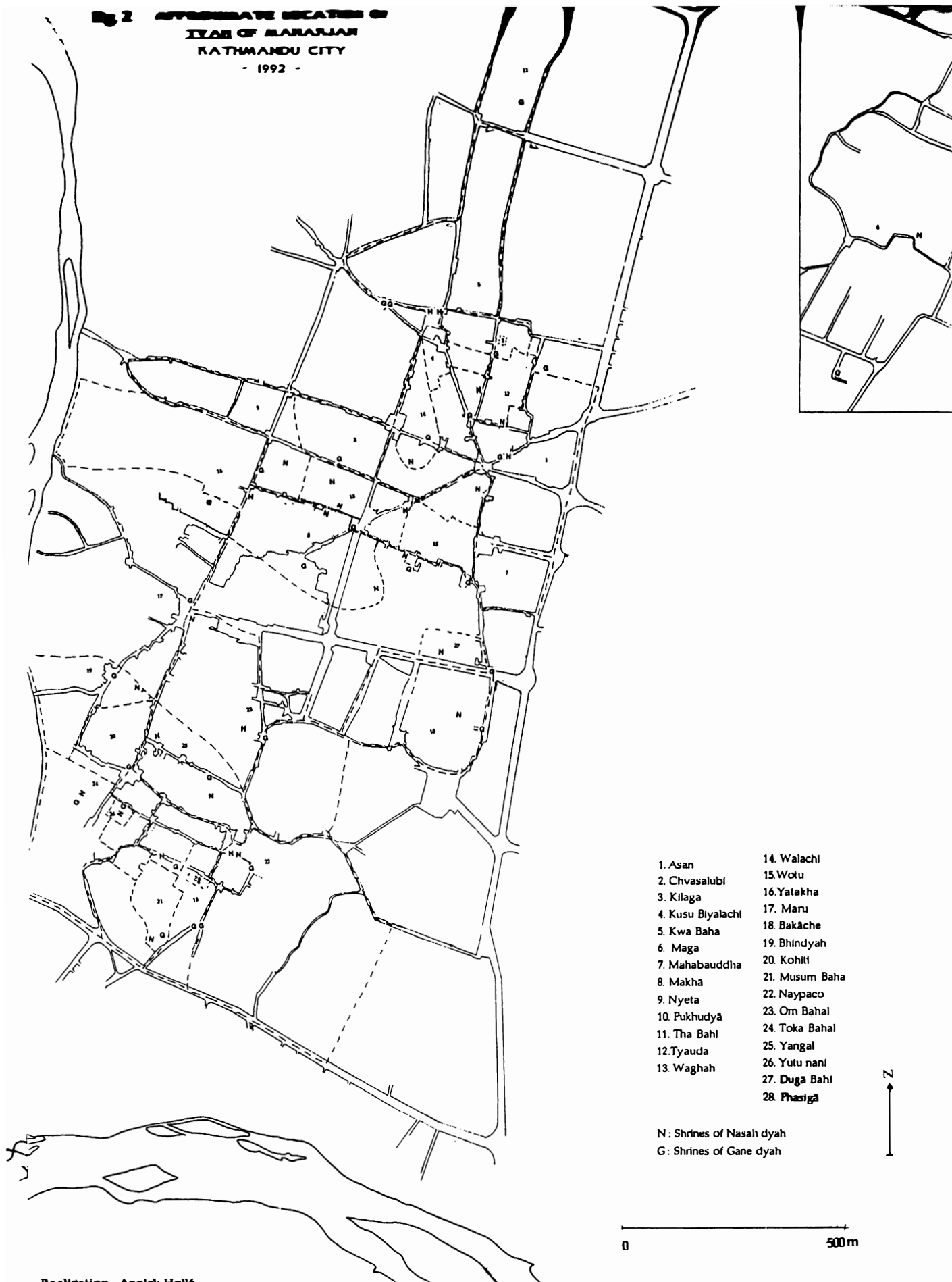
**Fig 1 REPARTITION
OF THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS
OF MAHARJAN BY TVAH
IN KATHMANDU**

- 1992 -



Realization: Annick Hollé

**Fig. 2 APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF
TEMPLES OF MARAJAN
KATHMANDU CITY
- 1992 -**

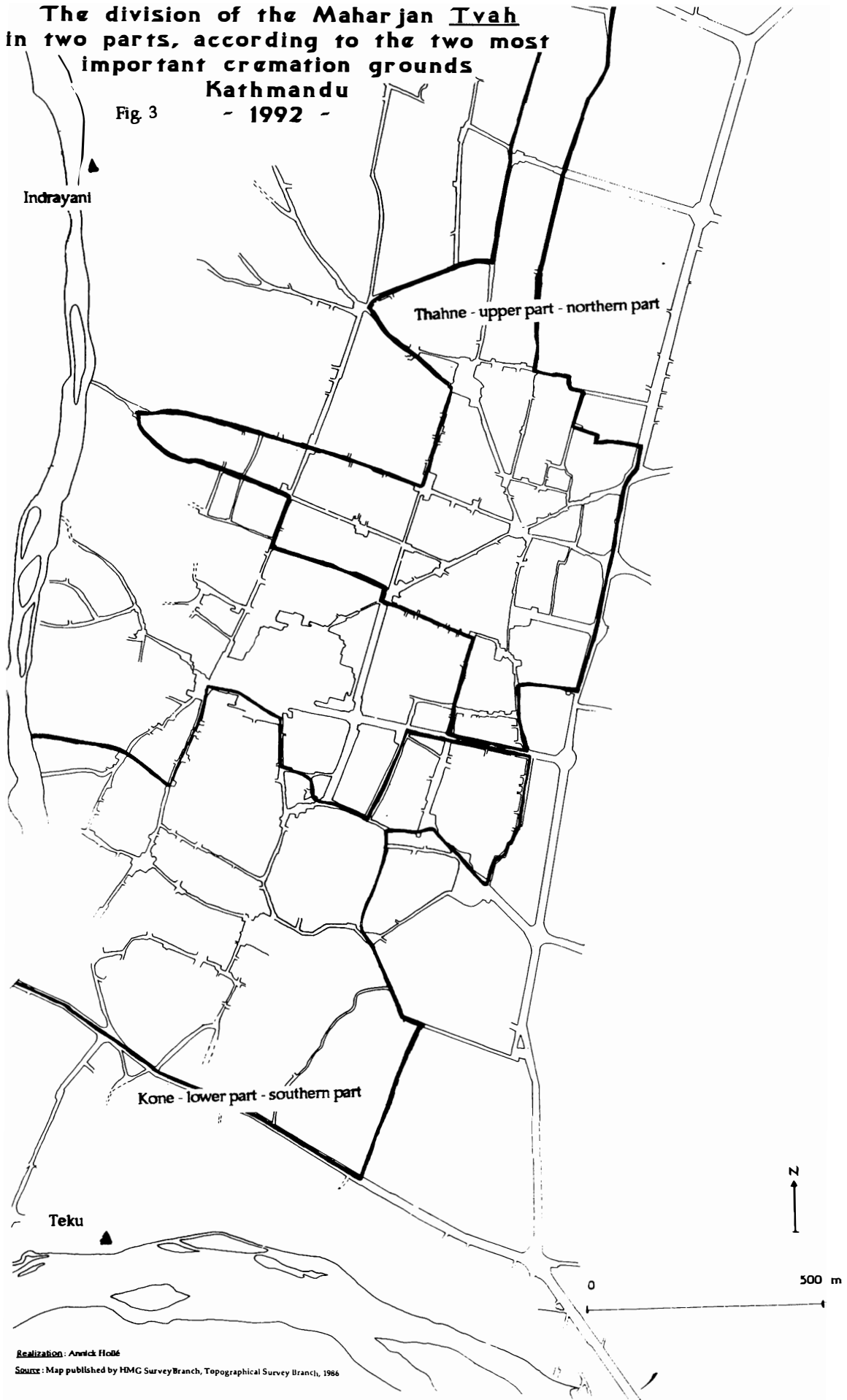


Realization : Annick Hollé

Source : Map published by HMG Survey Branch, Topographical Survey Branch, 1986.

**The division of the Maharjan Tvah
in two parts, according to the two most
important cremation grounds
Kathmandu**

Fig. 3 - 1992 -



Realization: Annick Hotté

Source: Map published by HMC Survey Branch, Topographical Survey Branch, 1986

References

- (1) - Cf. S. M. Greenwold, "Buddhist Brahman", *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, XV, 1974, p. 108.
- (2) - Cf. for instance R.K. Vajracarya, *Items of our Food Culture*, Kathmandu, Hiranarayana, 2039 B. S. , pp. 39-40. Cf. also D. Gellner & R. P. Pradhan, "The Social Organization of Urban Peasants : the Maharjan (Jyapu) of Kathmandu and Lalitpur", in *Newar Society*, Eds. D. Gellner & D. Quigley, in press.
- (3) - N. Gutschow, *Stadtraum und Ritual der Newarischen Städte im Kathmandu-tal*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1982, pp. 110-111.
- (4) - Cf. G. Toffin, *Société et religion chez les Néwar du Népal*, Paris, Ed. du C.N.R.S., 1984, ch. VII & VIII.
- (5) - S. Wiehler - Schneider and H. Wiehler, "A Classification of the Traditional Musical Instruments of the Newars", *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, vol. 4, 1980, p. 92.
- (6) - Cf. I. Grandin, *Music and Media in Local Life. Music Practice in a Newar Neighbourhood in Nepal*, Linköping, Linköping University, 1989, p. 69.
- (7) - *Idem*, pp. 68-69.
- (8) - *Idem*, pp. 68-69.
- (9) - Cf. for instance T. Ellingson. "Nasahdyah, Newar god of music. A photo essay", *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology*, vol. 8, 1990, pp. 221-272.

- (10) - I. Grandin, op. cit., p. 71.
- (11) - T. L. Manandhar, *Newari - English Dictionary*, Delhi, Agam kalaPrakashan, 1986, (Ed. by A. Vergati), p. 119.
- (12) - Cf. for instance G. M. Wegner, *The dhimay baja of Bhaktapur*, Wiesbaden Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner G. M. B. H., 1986, pp. 18-19.
- (13) - Simplifying, this part is composed by all the *tvah* located south of Hanuman Dhoka. We shall come back to this division when dealing with the repartition of the *tvah* in the town.
- (14) - The drum which the Maharjan also play, smaller than the *dhimay* and less important.
- (15) - The sample consists of 120 names. Some of them are not used and some are Newari names which we could not locate (less than 10).
- (16) - Ancient Buddhist monasteries, numerous in Kathmandu.
- (17) - The only two streets which do not lead to religious places are situated in Thamel, the tourist quarter of Kathmandu located in the northern part of the town. In this case, the given marks are names of restaurants or hotels.
- (18) - The Nepali name for very narrow streets inside the city.
- (19) - R.K. Vajracarya, *Items of our Food culture*, Kathmandu, Hiranarayana, 2039 B. S., pp. 39-40.
- (20) - Two explanations for not having *dhunya* were given by the Maharjan. The first is that Narsing is an incarnation of Vishnu, who is on the top of the divine hierarchy. The

summit of the *dhunya* is occupied by Hanuman. If Maharjans carried the *dhunya* near the sanctuary of Narsing, Hanuman would be physically higher than Vishnu, which should not occur. The second explanation is that the *dhunya* might cast a shadow on the shrine of Narsing. If this happened, Vishnu would be in the shadow, which again is antithetical to the Maharjan's beliefs.

(21) - Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, 1982, Vol. II, carte 8.

(22) - One ropani = 509 m²

(23) - Two new wards were created on Baisakh 26th, 2048 (April 1992). At that time, the ward number 10 (Baneswar) was divided into three parts : East Baneswar (n° 34), Baneswar (n° 10) and Koteswar (n° 35).

(24) - N. Gutschow, "Kathmandu : Historical Development, Spatial Structure, Social and Ritual Topography", in *Kathmandu City*, Innsbruck, Universitätsverlag Wagner ("Khumbu Himal", band 5, lief 3), 1979, p. 249.

(25) - For Kathmandu, see T. T. Lewis, *The Tuladhars of Kathmandu : A study of Buddhist Tradition in a Newar Merchant Community*. Columbia University, Unpublished Ph.D, 1984, R. P. Pradhan, *Domestic and Cosmic Rituals among the Hindu Newars of Kathmandu*, Nepal, New Delhi, 1986, unpublished Ph.D., and D. Gellner & R. P. Pradhan : "The Social organization of urban peasants ...", *op. cit.*. For Bhaktapur, cf. R. I. Levy, *Mesocosm, Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

LIST OF THE PRESENT MAHARJAN TOLS OF KATHMANDU

DATHU							
TOL	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	DHIMAY GUTHIYAR	OUTSIDE OR INSIDE	WALA CONEGU	MASAN (PITH)	MAIN DIVINITY	DHUNYA
MARU	161	161	Inside	Swayambhu	Laka Tirtha	Maru Gane dyah Asok Vinayak	yes

KONE							
TOL	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	DHIMAY GUTHIYAR	OUTSIDE OR INSIDE	WALA CONEGU	MASAN (PITH)	MAIN DIVINITY	DHUNYA
BAKACHE	150	70	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
BHINDYAH	87	24 24	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Bhindyah	no
KO HITI	75	75	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Nil Varahi	no
MUSUM BAH	300	300	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
NAYPACO (Phasigā)	90 70	135 40 & 80	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
OM BAHAL	84	40 & 30	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	yes
TOKA BAHAL	130	140	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
YANGAL	36	19	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no
YUTU NANI	40	105	Inside	Pacali Bhairav	Teku	Pacali Bhairav	no

LIST OF THE PRESENT MAHARJAN TOLS OF KATHMANDU

THAHNE							
TOL	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	DHIMAY GUTHIYAR	OUTSIDE OR INSIDE	WALA CONEGU	MASAN (PITH)	MAIN DIVINITY	DHUNYA
ASAN							
Bhotahiti/Kisan	17	16	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Annapurna	yes
Kamalachi/Pilatu	18	18	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Annapurna	no
CHVASALUBI	50	145	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Mhaipi Ajima	yes
JAMO	100	100	Outside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Kamaladi Gane dyah	yes
KILAGA	185	180	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Hati Gane dyah	yes
KUSU BIYALACHI	25	25	Inside	Siga	Luti Ajima	Swansafu Gane dyah	yes
KWA BAHA	84	84	Inside	Siga	Luti Ajima	-	yes
MAGA (Maligaon)	16	157	Outside	Maiti Devi	Maiti	Maiti Devi	no
MAHABAUDHA	70	70	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Luchu Maru Ajima	yes
MAKHA	2	80	Inside	Swayambhu	Konga Ajima	Tarani Ajima	yes
NYETA	150	90	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Sveti kali	yes
PUKHUDYA	175	175	Inside	Bhadrakali	Teku	Bhadrakali	yes
THA BAH	126	111	Outside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Garujuju	yes
		15					
TYAUDA	167	180	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Luti Ajima	yes
				Luti Ajima			
WAGHAH	58	60	Inside	Swayambhu	Luti Ajima	Aju dyah (Akas Bhairav)	yes
WALACHI	50	50	Inside	Siga	Luti Ajima	Narsingh Aju	no
WOTU	100	150	Inside	Bhadrakali	Luti Ajima	Gasi dyah/Bhadrakali	yes
YATAKHA	150	70	Inside	Swayambhu	Konga Ajima	Konga Ajima	yes
DUGA BAH	16	0	Inside	Bhadrakali	Teku	Bhadrakali	no